

There's a cost involved in following Jesus' way. There's a price to be paid for saying yes to his commands. I can't come to any other conclusion from today's text.

SLIDE I: John 13:30-35

As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. 31 When he was gone, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

33 'My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: where I am going, you cannot come.

34 'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

30-32: It's always night when we walk away from God; walk away from Jesus although it may not seem that way to us; when we walk away from one another; when we put our way above his way; when we try to work things out ourselves. How was the Father going to be glorified by what happened to Jesus? My initial response is it's not for me to ask or understand – as the hymn says:

**I am not skilled to understand,
What God has willed what God has planned?
I only know at His right hand
Stands one who is my Saviour**

33: I'm leaving you – how difficult for his close friends to understand. He knew the path he was taking, he knew what his Father asked him to do – the understanding for them came later as they modelled their obedience on Jesus.

34-5: The night before he died Jesus shared the Passover meal with the disciples. But he ended it with a totally different understanding and laid the basis for what we call among other things 'The Lord's Supper.' We'll be doing that next week and as the Newsletter says we'll be having communion before the children leave – you may like to talk to your children about this during the week.

He gave a new interpretation of what people needed to do to give expression to the life he shared with them.

Backtracking a little, Exodus 20 contains the 10 commandments foundational in the life of the Hebrew nation – a summary, if you like of the 613 commandments in the Torah. Have you noticed how 8 of the 10 are 'you shall not?' Sometimes I find it difficult when people refer back to the 10 commandments with their heavy emphasis on 'you shall not'. Difficult because I see Jesus' people living by what might be called a 'code of don'ts.' In a profound sense Jesus changes the negatives to positive. I'll explain what I mean.

Luke 10:25-28

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

26 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?'

27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself."

28 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.'

Love God and **love** your neighbour, **love** your neighbour as you love yourself and live – positive

Then in John, Jesus makes it even more interesting

³⁴ ‘A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’

The new commandment is expressed twice:

Love one another

You must love one another

And the new commandment, when obeyed and applied has a profound outcome

By this everyone will know you are my disciples

So Jesus restates God’s intention by saying, don’t be known by what you’re against but by what you’re for.

‘The early Christians in Rome were renowned because they cared for their own poor and needy and also for others’ poor and needy. While their care for outsiders brought them persecution, their care for their fellow Christians was admired. Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth in the late 2nd century, wrote to thank the Church in Rome for the aid they had sent to his church. From the beginning it is your custom to bestow your gifts in all places, and to furnish subsistence to many churches. You send relief to the needy, especially to those who work in the mines; in which you follow the example of your fathers.’

A few years later, Tertullian noted how the non-Christians would comment with astonishment about the Christians, ‘See how they love one another.’

The Church presented the Empire with something it could never be: a strange new community where people gathered and cared for each other not on the basis of gender, family, race or class (the world’s way of gathering) but by obedience to the Lord of love.

And the issue for us, on the day we celebrate with Ian and Edith Wylie their 50th wedding anniversary, is how do we put this Jesus’ command into practice because it’s not all that obvious– and maybe some of the things Ian and Edith have learned over these last 50 years can be instructive.

A. What love did Jesus model for us? (How long have you got?)

- Selfless – not thinking of himself and his needs. Even in the noblest of human love there may be some element of self – what am I going to from ‘my’ love?
- Sacrificial – no limits to what he would give and where he would go
- With understanding - he knew these men, he knew their weaknesses and yet he still loved them. Genuine and real love is open eyed – it loves the person who isn’t what we want them to be or isn’t who think they should be
- In a forgiving way – they were about to deny him and walk away; run actually. At this point we could safely say they never really understood him – they were blind, slow to learn, judgmental but Jesus held nothing against them. We poor creatures, more often than not, hurt those we love most, the community of Jesus is no exception and we must understand that all human love is built on forgiveness.

B How do Christians show love in community to one another?

Basic ways:

- In how we welcome, greet, smile and listen – so basic and so difficult

More difficult ways

- We try to **understand** and put up with difference and work through that – it's easier to love our neighbours and people overseas than it is people in the Christian community; it's easy to love one another when we're singing together – not so easy when the music stops.
- Maybe it's like this – **a person was asked, 'what's the toughest challenge being in AA?' Is it truth telling or going a week without drinking? NO! The hardest part of AA is being stuck in a group and having to admit you're no better than they are, and maybe going out in the middle of the night to support someone and stay with them. It means to do for others those tough things that you wouldn't do for your own family.** It seems to be that the genius of Christian community that we're with people who in God's eyes are no worse or no better than us – I'm not sure we get this.
- We encourage as often as we can and as regularly as we can, that's why I wrote in the Newsletter last week that we're missing Graeme Dodge – the great encourager
- We serve and we live in ways that build and don't destroy community; we serve in and through our community too. What a privilege it is to go and pray with the Divorce Care team on Tuesday nights. This is one of our most significant ministries. Great to be at KK, see Play Groups – service beyond measure.

C What have Ian and Edith learned that could teach us through their experience in the community of marriage? They've told us how they met?

I asked them what has contributed to their journey of being in the community of marriage over 50 years 1 day. We've already heard how Ian thought it was a marriage made in heaven – hard to dispute that.

From our conversation I took some things and I need to tell Ian and Edith I am paraphrasing:

- Not to take each other for granted
- Independence and interdependence – working together but still taking time to pursue their own interests
- Give and take – give up your rights; not always what I want
- Their relationship was built on the generous hospitality of the family where Ian boarded and the same for Edith in Dunedin – Ian mentioned southern hospitality and I'm sure that's something that's been a part of their journey
- And I would add – supporting each other in sorrow and sadness

All these can be true of the community of Jesus' followers

D What do we do when we disagree or when one of the people we've been called to love messes up?

You love them like Jesus does because he does

Your love will help and stimulate personal growth – condemnation and judgement won't - actually that it can't

We remember Peter's stirring admonition: **Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)**

I think that's about as much truth as I can cope with today! – I'm looking forward to seeing us, me included, applying this truth in the coming days and weeks. **Read again John 13:34-5**

